



Guide to the Larkin House Collection

Monterey State Historic Park

Monterey, California

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Title

Larkin House Collection, 1832-1957 (bulk 1880-1920)

Collection Number

484.1

Collector

California State Parks
Larkin House State Historic Monument
Monterey State Historic Park
Monterey, CA 93940

Extent

17.93 cubic feet (17 boxes)

Repository

California State Parks.
Larkin House State Historic Monument
Monterey State Historic Park
Monterey, CA 93940

Physical location

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Monterey District Museum Curator at (831) 649-7118.

Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open for research by appointment only. Appointments may be made by calling (831) 649-7110

Accruals

Additional materials may be added to this collection as donations are received.

Additional Materials

This collection contains only those materials suitable for treatment as archives. Artifacts, monographs (books), and decorative objects housed in the Larkin House are not included in this collection. For more information on these additional materials, contact the Monterey District Museum Curator at (831) 649-7118.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[item], Larkin House Collection, Monterey State Historic Park, Monterey, California.

Acquisition Information

This collection was acquired by donation from Alice Larkin Toulmin (1879-1963), granddaughter of Thomas O. Larkin. Her father, Alfred Otis Larkin, was born at Larkin House.

History of the Larkin House State Historic Monument and Thomas O. Larkin

The Larkin House is a reminder of the influence Thomas Oliver Larkin exerted not only on California's political history but also its secular architecture during the first half of the 19th century. In 1834, Larkin constructed one of the first two-story houses to be built in Monterey and one of the earliest examples of Monterey colonial architecture. It became known as the Larkin House adobe. Larkin adapted eastern form to available materials: adobe and redwood. The Larkin House adobe is distinctive for its broad roof overhang above the second floor windows and its surrounding balcony. The roof, designed to shelter the adobe from the corroding effects of rain and wind, was stylish as well as practical and became the predominant design for adobe buildings of the period. As Larkin's home and business place, for over five important years the adobe served as headquarters and the center of social life of the Capital. Here historic decisions regarding California's future were made.

The earliest days of California statehood have a voice in the life of Thomas Oliver Larkin. He served as the first and only United States Consul to Mexican California, 1844-48, and, as a confidential agent of the U.S. government for two of those years, 1846-48, served to "create a favorable feeling" toward the United States via an extensive propaganda campaign in favor of American acquisition of California that helped to bring about the U.S. seizure of California in the Mexican War. He served from 1847-49 as Navy agent and Naval storekeeper, and was a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention, held at Colton Hall in Monterey, in 1849. California became a state in 1850 and Monterey was its first Capital.

Born in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1802, Thomas O. Larkin was an orphan by the age of sixteen. Of notable Anglo-American descent- one ancestor, Richard Warren, came to America on the Mayflower, and his Grandfather Ebenezer Larkin fought at Bunker Hill- Larkin was forced to make his way in life early, and struggled for a while. He pursued his earliest business ventures in Massachusetts but in 1821 left to try his luck in North Carolina. His efforts met with little success and the young Larkin, encouraged by the adventures of his sailor half-brother, hoped for a better location to build a successful venture. While he preferred to remain in the east, Larkin decided that California was to be his land of venture. He went to California to join his half-brother, John B. R. Cooper, a merchant sea captain and another American destined to importance in early California. He sailed from Boston to Monterey in 1832, and during the voyage had an affair with a married woman, Rachel Hobson Holmes, who was traveling to California to join her own sea captain husband. Not long after her arrival in California, Rachel received news of her husband's death. She and Larkin married in 1833, and the couple (together with a child who had been born to them out of wedlock) took up residence in Monterey. Rachel became the first Anglo-American woman to settle in Alta (Upper) California. Larkin settled in Monterey and opened a store, conducting trade with Mexico and the Sandwich Islands, unquestionably taking advantage of his half-brother's success as a merchant seaman.

As the political and economic capital of Alta California, Monterey was well suited to Larkin's business activities. Not content to work in the employ of his half-brother, Larkin soon embarked upon a successful career as a financier and merchant. After the U.S. conquest, Larkin turned his attention to real estate development and he and a partner, Semple, created the community of

Benicia, the first California town to be founded by promoters. He eventually held extensive tracts of land from the Monterey area north, including in San Francisco and the Feather River Valley. Larkin was an unabashed social climber, and he fostered personal relationships with the influential -- both Californios (Spanish-speaking Californians) and Anglo-Americans -- whom he thought might advance his business interests. Unlike many Anglo-American settlers in Mexican California, Larkin does not seem to have harbored feelings of racism toward the Californios. He also distinguished himself from most of his compatriots who had arrived in California during the 1830s by remaining as staunchly Protestant as he was patriotic, and he never converted to Catholicism or became a Mexican citizen.

While perhaps overshadowed by his role as a businessman, Larkin also engaged in diplomatic activities which facilitated California's transition from Mexican to U.S. control. In 1844, he was appointed U.S. Consul at Monterey and was the only individual to hold that position. As Consul, Larkin promoted U.S. economic interests and protected the civil rights of Anglo-American immigrants. In 1845, President James K Polk appointed him as a confidential agent. Larkin used that position to further what he had earlier advocated in a series of letters published in several eastern newspapers, namely, the peaceful acquisition of California, initiated by the Californios themselves, by the United States. However, Larkin's plans for this peaceful union were shortly to be dashed by the outbreak of war between the United States and Mexico.

At the time of his death in San Francisco on October 27, 1858, Larkin was one of the richest and most highly respected men in California.

Chronology

1832 Thomas Oliver Larkin and his soon-to-be wife, Rachel Hobson, arrive in Monterey to join his half-brother John B. Rogers Cooper.

1834 Larkin begins construction of his home at the corner of Calle Principal and Jefferson Streets in Monterey.

1844 Larkin is appointed U.S. Consul to Alta California. The adobe serves as the consulate.

1845 President James K. Polk enlists Larkin's special help in promoting U.S. interests in California.

1850 California admitted to the Union as the 31st state. Business concerns prompt Larkin's move to New York.

1853 Larkin returns to California, settling in San Francisco.

1858 Thomas O. Larkin dies. After his death, the Larkin House is sold as part of the disposition of the estate.

1922 Larkin's granddaughter, Mrs. Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin, the daughter of his oldest son Oliver, purchases the house and returns control of it to the Larkin family. She lives in the house for 35 years.

1957 Larkin's granddaughter donates the historic adobe and its contents to the State of California as a memorial to her grandfather.

Bibliography

Additional information about Thomas O. Larkin may be found in the following publications:

Bancroft, Hubert Howe, 1832-1918. History of California. San Francisco: The History Company, 1898-1890.

Conmy, Peter Thomas. The centenary of the American consulate in California. Thomas Oliver Larkin, consul, 1843-1848. San Francisco: Native Sons of the Golden West, 1943.

Hague, Harlan, and Langum, David. Thomas O. Larkin: a life of patriotism and profit in Old California. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

Kelsey, Rayner Wickersham, 1879-1934. The United States Consulate in California. Berkeley: University of California, 1910.

Larkin, Thomas Oliver, 1802-1858 (Robert J. Parker, ed.). Chapters in the early life of Thomas Oliver Larkin, including his experiences in the Carolinas and building of the Larkin house at Monterey. San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1939.

Tays, George, 1900-1958. The Larkin House. Berkeley: Works Progress Administration, 1936.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in a library's online public access catalog:

Library of Congress Subject Headings

Personal Names:

Cooper, John B. Rogers, 18xx – 1872.

Larkin, Thomas Oliver, 1802 – 1858.

Subjects:

California—History—To 1846.

California—History—1846-1850.

California—Pioneers.

Historic buildings—California—Monterey.

Monterey (Calif.)—History.

United States—Foreign relations—Mexico.

Scope and Content

The Larkin House Collection consists of records, photographs, and memorabilia connected with the Larkin House State Historic Monument in Monterey, California. In this historic adobe, decisions were made and actions taken that shaped the early history of the State of California. The collection, while not possessing a large group of Thomas Larkin manuscript documents like that of the Bancroft Library, still contains good examples of documents and photographs associated with Larkin and his descendants, particularly his son Oliver, Oliver's wife Mary Ball and the Ball family, and Larkin's granddaughter, Alice Sistare Larkin. An item of note is the original 1852 linen Map and Deed of the Flugge Rancho on the Feather River, Northern California, property of Thomas O. Larkin, enclosed in a leather case. Additional items of note are the well-preserved photograph albums of Alice S. Larkin, which, over a range of thirty years, 1890 to 1920, contain a visual record of her extensive international travels and supplies a wealth of images from a host of cultures around the world at the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries.

Organization

The collection is organized in five record series, with subseries as appropriate:

- I. Larkin Family Papers (2 document cases, 1.46 cu. ft.)
 - a. Ball family ephemera
 - b. Ball family papers
 - c. Larkin correspondence
 - d. Larkin family papers
 - e. Larkin family genealogies
 - f. Miscellaneous Larkin-related materials
 - g. Sistare family correspondence
- II. Henry W. and Alice S. Larkin Toulmin Papers (2 document cases, 1.46 cu. ft.)
 - a. Ephemera
 - b. Estate valuation, Henry W. Toulmin
 - c. Larkin house inventory (A.L. Toulmin copy)
 - d. Manuscript writings
 - e. Miscellaneous papers
 - f. Pets – photographs and related documents
- III. Photographs (4 document cases and 5 boxes, 4.30 cu. ft.)
 - a. Ball family photographs
 - b. Larkin family photographs
 - c. Toulmin family photographs
 - d. Unidentified/unrelated photographs
 - e. Larkin family residences
 - f. Photograph albums
- IV. Oversize Materials (2 boxes, 1.95 cu. ft.)
- V. Separated Materials - monographs (2 boxes, 8.76 cu. ft.)

Arrangement and Processing Notes

The collection was arranged chronologically as much as dates could be ascertained. The majority of the photographs in the collection have no dates and have been arranged according to the physical age progression of the subject. During the processing of the collection, all metal fasteners such as brads and paperclips were removed and replaced with plastic inert fasteners. All materials were housed in acid-free paper enclosures with the exception of the photographs, which were all individually sleeved in inert PAT-passed polyethylene sleeves.

Collection Contents

Series I. Larkin Family Papers, 1832-1860 and undated. 1.46 cubic ft.

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series consists of various estate papers, genealogies, and other papers from the Larkin, Ball, and Sistare families, all ancestors of Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin.

BOX 1: (7 folders)

1. Ball family ephemera
2. Ball family papers
3. Ball family papers
4. Ball family papers
5. Larkin correspondence, Frank R. Larkin to Fred ____, 1860 (1 item)
6. Larkin ephemera
7. Two facsimiles and one original ship's manifest from the Brig *Colonel Fremont*, consigning goods to Larkin, 1853

BOX 2: (6 folders)

1. Family genealogies
2. Family genealogies
3. Family genealogies
4. Thomas O. Larkin likeness - litho plate and impressions
5. Alfred O. Larkin typescript poetry anthology, "Fancies"
6. Lucy Sistare family correspondence, 1832-1839 (5 items)

Series II. Henry W. and Alice S. Larkin Toulmin Papers, 1953 and undated. 1.46 cubic ft.

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series consists of the papers of Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin and her husband Henry W. Toulmin, including a large collection of memorabilia connected with Arbury Squib, their prize Springer Spaniel and other dogs they showed in dog shows and hunting competitions.

BOX 3: (5 folders)

1. Ephemera
2. Estate valuation, Henry W. Toulmin, 1953
3. Larkin House inventory taken by Alice Larkin Toulmin
4. Manuscript writings, Alice Larkin Toulmin
5. Miscellaneous papers

BOX 4: (6 folders)

1. Pets – photographs and related documents: Arbury Squib materials, 37 items in 3 subfolders:
 - a. Registration papers, pedigree, awards, and other material (15 items)
 - b. Photographs (10 items)
 - c. Photographs (12 items)
2. Pets – photographs and related documents: other dogs, papers (6 items)
3. Pets – photographs and related documents: other dogs, photographs (9 items)
4. Pets – photographs and related documents: show ribbons (no count)
5. Pets – photographs and related documents: show ribbons (no count)
6. Other animal-related activities: photographs (2 items)

Series III. Photographs, 1953 and undated. 1.46 cubic ft.

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series consists of photographs from all series, collected together for storage and preservation reasons. Oversize photographs are housed within a separate series of oversize materials.

BOX 5: (9 folders)

1. Ball family: Alice, Mary, Martha, and Julia Ball (10 items)
2. Ball family: Fanny Ball, Henry B. Ball (5 items)
3. Ball family: Julia Ball (1 item, framed)
4. Ball family: Martha Ball (1 item, framed)
5. Ball family: Martha and Julia Ball (1 item, framed)
6. Ball family: Mary L. Ball Larkin Chappell (1 item, framed)
7. Ball family: Mary L. Ball Larkin Chappell (18 items)
8. Ball family: Trueworthy M. Ball (3 items)
9. Ball family: Alice Douglas Sistare Ball (1 item, framed)

BOX 6: (10 folders)

1. Larkin family: Alfred O. Larkin (2 items)
2. Larkin family: Alfred O. Larkin (1 item, framed)
3. Larkin family: Carolina Larkin (2 items)
4. Larkin family: Rachel Hobson Larkin (5 items)
5. Larkin family: Thomas O. Larkin (5 items)
6. Larkin family: other Larkin family members (6 items)
7. Larkin family: Sistare family members (2 items)
8. Larkin family: Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin (2 items)
9. Larkin family: Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin (12 items)
10. Larkin family: Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin (12 items)

BOX 7: (8 folders)

1. Larkin family: Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin (8 items)
2. Larkin family: Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin (4 items)

3. Toulmin family: Henry Wroughton Toulmin (21 items)
4. Toulmin family: other Toulmin family members (2 items)
5. Unidentified/unrelated photographs (3 items)
6. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- exterior (72 items)
7. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- exterior (30 items)
8. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- interior (68 items)

BOX 8: (8 folders)

1. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- interior (68 items)
2. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- interior (12 items)
3. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- interior (16 items, includes 10 color transparencies)
4. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Monterey- exterior (1 item, framed)
5. Larkin family residences: Larkin House, Portsmouth, NH- exterior (11 items, includes 1 photo of T.M. Ball residence, also in Portsmouth)
6. Larkin (Sistare) family residences: Scarborough House, Savannah, GA- exterior (8 items, includes 5 photographs and 3 items related to history of Scarborough House)
7. Larkin (Sistare) family residences: Scarborough House, Savannah, GA- exterior (1 item, framed)
8. Larkin (Toulmin) family residences: Toulmin Ranch, Santa Barbara (2 items)

BOX 9:

Two photograph albums and loose photographs that have fallen from albums:

1. Canton, Macau, Southeast Asia, Angkor Wat, Korea, Russia, Germany, Belgium, England. Canada, photos of San Francisco Pan-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 and San Francisco/Peninsula views, the California coast to Monterey and Santa Barbara, Riverside, Catalina. Postcards of Asian locales.
2. Mexico and Portsmouth, NH. Pictures of family members.

BOX 10:

Two photograph albums:

1. Central America including Panama as canal is being built and Costa Rica into Europe: Spain, Portugal, Italy, circa 1912.
2. China and its people, Indonesia, India, Ceylon, no date.

BOX 11:

Three photograph albums:

1. Asia Minor and eastern European trip of 1912 taken by Alice Larkin. Includes a certificate/ invitation to the consecration of the Anglican cathedral at Khartoum, Jan. 26, 1912.
2. 1918 trip to California featuring photos of both north and south of the State and some photo postcards. Many photos of the Larkin House and the Monterey Bay.

3. Album of photos from trip to North Africa and Asia, including views of Cairo, Egyptian ruins, and British India. No date, although style of dress indicates late 1910s.

BOX 12:

Two photograph albums:

1. No notations, containing photographs of Asia and its people, no dates
2. Vellum album with leather tie and colored, tooled insignia 'ASL' (Alice Sistare Larkin), featuring annotated photographs of an extended European tour taken in 1901-1902.

BOX 13: (13 items)

All oversize photographs, larger than 8" x 10", of Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin, Mary L. Ball Larkin Chappell, and Rachel Hobson Larkin.

Series IV. Oversize Materials, 1847-1913 and undated. 1.95 cubic ft.

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series is mostly oversize art works and historical items including a map and deed of the Flugge Rancho on the Feather River, Northern California, property of Thomas O. Larkin, dated 1852.

BOX 14: (6 items)

1. Map and deed of the Flugge Rancho on the Feather River, Northern California, property of Thomas O. Larkin. Map dated 1852. Enclosed in leather case.
2. 1 framed oversize photograph of Henry Toulmin on Ugandan safari, 1913.
3. 4 matted color prints of "Arbury Squib," the Toumins' prize spaniel

BOX 15

1. 14 issues of the Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review, April – December 1847. Good information about the War with Mexico.
2. An assortment of magazine articles about the Larkin House and associated historic properties in Monterey.
3. pencil and watercolor of Larkin House by A. Barretto, n.d.
4. watercolor of Larkin House given to Mrs. Toulmin by the artist, Oliver W. Larkin of Smith College, n.d.
5. August F. Gay etching of Larkin House, n.d.
6. set of five oversize photographs of Larkin House in Portsmouth, NH, n.d.
7. set of 8 oversize photographs of interiors and exteriors of Larkin House, Monterey, 6 b/w, 2 color
8. set of 6 oversize aerial photographs of Toulmin ranch in Santa Barbara, California
9. set of 3 copies, each boxed, of the Historic American Landmarks desk calendar for 1956, Berkshire Publishing Co., Cambridge, Massachusetts
10. 1 rolled poster reproduction of "Pinkie" by Sir Joshua Reynolds

Series V. Separated Materials. 8.76 cubic ft.**Series Scope and Content Summary**

This series consists entirely of books donated to the State by Mrs. Toulmin.

BOXES 16 -18:

Monographs

Atherton, Gertrude F. H. The Splendid Idle Forties: stories of old California. New York: Macmillan Co., 1902.

Bailey, John. Book of engravings, presented to Mr. I.R. Rowntree, Esq., Stockton, including a monograph letter of presentation from Bailey. London: John Bailey, 1818.

California. Constitution of the State of California, 1849. San Marino: Friends of the Huntington Library, 1949.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. The history of the most renowned Don Quixote of Mancha: and his trusty squire Sancho Pancha, now made English according to the humour of our modern language. And adorned with several copper plates. By J.P. (J. Phillips) London: Thomas Hodgkin, 1657. (Presented to Alice Larkin Toulmin by Mary Magmillin Norton, June 1930.)

Farnham, Thomas Jefferson. Travels in California. Oakland: Biobooks, 1947.

Grobe, Charles. Buds and blossoms: 100 sacred melodies with brilliant variations for the piano. Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1857.

Hammond, George P. (ed.). The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, February second 1848. Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1949.

Jacob, John. Annals of some of the British Norman isles constituting the bailiwick of Guernsey: as collected from private manuscripts, public documents and former historians. Paris: J. Smith, 1830.

Kentucky State Historical Society. Register. Kentucky State Historical Society. Vol. 37, No. 118. January 1939. Article on Thomas O. Larkin on pp. 57-58. Inscribed to Mrs. Toulmin by the author, Robert J. Parker.

Parker, Robert J. (ed.). Chapters in the early life of Thomas Oliver Larkin, including his experiences in the Carolinas and building of the Larkin House at Monterey. San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1939.

Twain, Mark, and Wecter, Dixon (ed.) Mark Twain in three moods: three new items of Twainiana. San Marino: Friends of the Huntington Library, 1948.

Woodruff, Jacqueline McCart. Benicia, the promise of California. Vallejo: Jacqueline M. Woodruff, 1947.

Holy Bible. Charlestown, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1803. (Larkin family bible)

Holy Bible. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1841. (minion 24vo. In leather with engraved clasp of F.E. Ball, Sep. 8th, 1843.)

Holy Bible. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1852. (8vo. Presented to Alice Douglas Sistare on her wedding day, Nov. 21, 1855, by her grandmother, M. (?) Sistare.)

Bound portfolio of song music. Various dates, 1850s.